

**Suggested Remarks**  
**Francis Donovan, Acting Mission Director,**  
**USAID/Philippines**

**Signing Ceremony for the Renewal of  
Memorandum of Agreement between the  
Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) and Visayan  
Forum Foundation, Inc. (VF) on Port Halfway  
House for Trafficked Women and Children  
PPA Training Center, Port Area, Manila  
11 July 2006, 5:00 p.m.**

Distinguished guests, partners in anti-  
trafficking in persons initiatives, ladies,  
and gentlemen.

On behalf of the United States Government  
and the American People, I am delighted to  
have this opportunity to join you for this  
signing ceremony for the renewal of the  
Memorandum of Agreement between the  
Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) and the  
Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. (VF) on the  
port halfway house for trafficked women and  
children initiative. It is my great pleasure  
to have this chance to meet with anti-

trafficking champions and practitioners both from the government and NGOs.

Since 2001, the Visayan Forum has partnered with PPA by operating halfway houses for trafficked victims called "Bahay Silungan sa Daungan" in ports where human traffickers have been known to operate. Visayan Forum's partnership with the government, particularly the PPA, and the private shipping companies was cited as an international best practice in anti-trafficking work in the 2005 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report. The report describes the partnership as follows: "The PPA, police and crews of private shipping companies identify victims, mainly children, transiting the port and turn them over to Visayan Forum, which provides housing and protection. Visayan Forum then works with the police to facilitate investigations and with the social welfare department for counseling and repatriation of victims."

With PPA's strong support, the Visayan Forum is now in the forefront of providing services to trafficking victims by operating and managing the halfway houses provided by the PPA in major Philippine ports namely, North Harbor Manila, Batangas, Sorsogon, and Davao. These halfway houses provide temporary shelter and protective services to victims and potential victims of human trafficking.

In close coordination with the PPA, Visayan Forum also mobilizes and builds the anti-trafficking capacity of the port community, comprising private shipping companies, law enforcers and labor groups, and facilitates the creation and operation of an Anti-Trafficking Taskforce at the Port.

We commend PPA and Visayan Forum for this unique, strong and effective partnership. Today, we are all witnesses to the renewed

commitment of both PPA and Visayan Forum to work together to fight human trafficking. We certainly hope that your continuous partnership and efforts will lead to more successful interventions against trafficking in persons.

The battle against human trafficking is a high priority for the U.S. Government. Development assistance from the American people contributed more than \$1 million to support the anti-trafficking activities in the Philippines last year. The U.S. Government provided grants to partner NGOs (such as Visayan Forum) to raise public awareness of the human trafficking problem, support the effective enforcement of the anti-trafficking law, educate law enforcement agencies and the judiciary on the provisions of the law, and provide essential services to victims such as temporary shelter, counseling, repatriation, and legal advice.

We congratulate the Philippines for being upgraded to Tier 2 in the 2006 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report. We are pleased to note that the Philippines is making significant efforts in the fight against human trafficking. We believe that this is the result of the combined efforts and collective commitment of all the stakeholders - government, non-governmental organizations, private sector, the donor community, and the Filipino people themselves.

This event today is an example of our collective efforts and commitment. It is our sincere hope that your continued collective efforts and determination to fight trafficking will save more Filipinos from a life of misery and abuse. USAID is proud to be your partner and we salute you all for your important work.

Maraming salamat po at mabuhay tayong lahat!